



Conversation Starters for Talking With Youth About Healthy Romantic Relationships


Use these conversation starters to talk with youth about communication in their romantic relationships.

 Communication	
Active listening	
Getting started	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does active listening look like to you? In other words, how does someone show that they are really listening to you?
Continuing discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you approach a discussion with your partner(s) if you wanted them to listen to you more actively? • Have you and your partner(s) discussed words or actions that signal you are actively listening to one another?
Following up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you and your partner(s) used active listening since we last spoke?
Honesty about wants and needs	
Getting started	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways are you honest with your partner(s) about your wants and needs?
Continuing discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What wants and needs are easier or more difficult to be honest about? What barriers are there to being honest? • How might you let your partner(s) know they can be honest with you? • How can you prepare yourself and respond when you have an honest conversation about wants and needs that involves difficult topics?
Following up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you feeling about the amount of honesty about your wants and needs within your relationship(s) since we last talked?
Nonverbal communication	
Getting started	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kinds of nonverbal cues do you use when you communicate with your partner(s) (e.g., eye contact, hand movement, direction you face)?
Continuing discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What nonverbal communication cues do you use that help you have good conversations with your partners(s)? • What nonverbal communication cues do you use that may challenge your conversations with your partner(s)? • What nonverbal communication cues do you notice your partner(s) using when they communicate with you?
Following up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you changed how you communicate using nonverbal cues with your partner(s) since we last spoke?

Use these conversation starters to talk with young people about boundaries/limits in their romantic relationships.

 Boundaries and Limits	
Establishing boundaries/limits	
Getting started	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you and/or your partner(s) set a boundary or limit, how do you show you respect that limit?
Continuing discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is an example of a boundary/limit that you set and your partner respected? • How comfortable are you talking to your partner(s) about boundaries/limits you want them to better respect? What helps you feel more comfortable with setting a boundary or limit? • What does considering your partner(s) boundaries/limits look like to you?
Following up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since we last spoke, what boundaries have you set with your partner and how were those boundaries respected?
Physical boundaries	
Getting started	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you know your partner(s) respect your physical boundaries?
Continuing discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do your partner(s) check in on your comfort with your physical boundaries? • How do your partner(s) react when you say no or share you are uncomfortable? What are some ways you can talk with them about how you would like them to change? • How do you react and change when your partner tells you no or shares they are uncomfortable?
Following up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways have you and your partner(s) further discussed what is off limits or uncomfortable for each of you?
Personal belongings	
Getting started	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do your partner(s) show they know and follow your boundaries for using your personal belongings and/or those related to personal information, such as asking for your password for social media or monitoring your social media?
Continuing discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you and your partner(s) determine your boundaries around personal belongings and personal information? • How can you discuss boundaries around using your personal items and information with your partners? • In what ways can you discuss your partner(s)' boundaries around the ways you use their personal items and information? • How might discussing your boundaries change your relationship with your partner(s)?
Following up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you and your partner(s) demonstrated understanding and respect for your boundaries in sharing personal belonging and information since we last spoke?

Use these conversation starters to talk with young people about shared power in their romantic relationships.

 Shared Power	
Input in decision making	
Getting started	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some examples of the input you have or want to have when making decisions?
Continuing discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you are having a conversation or making a decision with your partner(s), what kind of input do you want to have? • How comfortable are you talking with your partner(s) about the kind of input you have (e.g., spending time together and apart, day-to-day decisions, or decisions about sex and contraception)? • Do you think your partner(s) have the input in decision making they want? Why?
Following up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the input in decision-making with your partner(s) been since we last spoke?
Influence of societal pressure and/or bias	
Getting started	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do societal pressures or biases such as those related to gender identity, sexual orientation, race, religion, or ability affect how you share power in your relationships?
Continuing discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How comfortable are you talking to your partner(s) about how gender identity, sexual orientation, race, or ability affect power sharing in your relationships? • What do you and your partner(s) do to prevent biases or societal pressures from affecting power sharing in your relationships?
Following up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you and your partner(s) talked about how biases or societal pressures affect how you share power in your relationships since we last talked?
Agreement about power sharing	
Getting started	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your relationship(s), how do you discuss and come to a mutual agreement about roles and power when making decisions?
Continuing discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways do you have mutual agreement, such as how you spend time together, who you spend time with, or decisions about sex and contraception? • In what areas do you and your partner(s) lack agreement or have an imbalance? • How comfortable are you describing your concerns and negotiating a change if roles and power become unbalanced? How would you start a conversation about an imbalance of power with your partner(s)?
Following up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How have you and your partner(s) experienced and discussed roles and power dynamics in your romantic relationship(s) since we last spoke?



Excerpted from: Rosenberg, R., Naylor, K., Simone-Woods, N., Rust, K., Beckwith, S. (2024). *Crucial Conversations about Healthy Romantic Relationships: A Toolkit for Youth Supporting Professionals*. Child Trends.

To access the full technical assistance tool, please scan the provided QR code or visit:
<https://activatecenter.org/resource/crucial-conversations-about-healthy-romantic-relationships>